

FISH & WILDLIFE COMMISSION AGENDA ITEM COVER SHEET

Meeting Date: April 10, 2014

Agenda Item: Farming Lease – Isaac Homestead Wildlife Management Area

Division: Fish and Wildlife

Action Needed: Final

Time Needed on Agenda for this Presentation: 10 minutes

Background

The 1,169-acre Isaac Homestead Wildlife Management Area was purchased by FWP to maintain a riparian/cropland habitat complex to benefit a diversity of wildlife while enhancing public hunting opportunities. The proposal is to continue a share-crop arrangement on 125 acres for one year. The affected fields have traditionally been used for agricultural production. As proposed, the lessee would cultivate, plant, and retain a portion (75 percent) of the grain crop harvest, leaving the remaining crop (25 percent) standing for wildlife during winter months. The benefit and purpose of the lease is to provide winter habitat and forage, primarily for wintering pheasants, deer, and turkeys. Standing crops also benefit migrating waterfowl and a variety of other wildlife species.

Public Involvement Process & Results

The Environmental Assessment for the project was released on Feb. 7, with comments accepted through Feb. 28. FWP did not receive any comment in regards to the agricultural lease. FWP issued its decision notice on March 5 in support of the agricultural lease, contingent on Commission approval.

Alternatives and Analysis

Under the "no action" alternative, agricultural lands would not be cultivated and FWP would need to commit resources to manage weeds on the previously cultivated 125 acres of farm fields, and wildlife would be negatively impacted by lack of wintering habitat and forage resources. Renewing the farming lease, however, would benefit wildlife by providing high-quality forage and wintering habitat and continued hunting opportunity for deer and pheasant with little expense to FWP.

Agency Recommendation & Rationale

FWP recommends that the Commission approve the agricultural lease on Isaac Homestead WMA, which would provide necessary winter forage for wildlife and promote quality hunting opportunities for sportsmen.

Proposed Motion

I move the FWP Commission approve the farming lease on Isaac Homestead WMA.